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Your Office in Washington
by

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CPYRGHT

Miscounting American missiles is generally conceded to be a significant factor in President Kennedy's election in 1960. Miscounting Russian missiles in Cuba appears to be a possibility of his failure for reelection in 1964—the missile gap versus the missile pack. I well recall the charge that a missile gap existed in the American arsenal before the President's election in 1960, but that it miraculously was declared to have disappeared 30 days after the Kennedy Administration was installed.

This conclusion is a complete departure from the generally conceded result only a few weeks ago of his handling of the October missile affair in Cuba. This transition has come about because of a sequence of bold charges made by Senator Kenneth Keating (R-N.Y.) and others, an immediate denial by Administration spokesmen, and then a subsequent acknowledgment that the Keating charges could be substantially correct. This has caused responsible press correspondents to carefully review the series of charges, denials, and subsequent admissions and developments over a period of time commencing last July. Because of the consistency in the pattern of the July, August and September

charges by Senator Keating and their later establishment as valid, a whole shadow has been immediately cast over the accuracy of reports lately coming from the Administration on the Communist arsenal and manpower strength now in Castro's Cuba.

Your Congressman does not profess to have any special or unusual source of information. But as one who had accepted in good faith the facts of the Administration briefing at an executive session in Chicago during the pre-election Cuban crisis, I cannot help but be left with a feeling of apprehension over the recent statements made by Administration spokesmen relative to Cuba today. Although the daily press has fully reported the chronological changes and denials, the record in brief is as follows.

Senator Keating requested in writing from the State Department on August 16 a comment on rumors on Capitol Hill that Soviet troops were being landed in Cuba. On August 30, the State Department replied it had "no information of any Soviet bloc troops had landed in Cuba." One day previous, President Kennedy had reported to a White House news conference that "we do not have evidence that there are Russian troops there" (Cuba). On August 31, Keating told the Senate that he

in Russian uniforms were landed in Cuba, and on September 2 the Soviet Union virtually confirmed the Keating report by stating that it had agreed to supply arms and technical supplies to Cuba. This apparently provoked the President into conceding there were short-range missiles in Cuba but purely for defensive purposes. On October 9, Keating stated 5,000 troops were stationed in Cuba and at least half a dozen launching sites for intermediate-range offensive missiles were under construction. On October 14, Special Assistant to the President McGeorge Bundy said "there is no present likelihood that the . . . Cuban government and the Soviet government would in any combination attempt to install a major offensive capability. . . . This was the same date that the President later identified as the date the first reliable information of an offensive buildup was received by him. In mid-January, Senator Keating announced that 20,000 troops and other offensive weapons were now in Cuba. This at first was denied by the Pentagon spokesman and later was conceded to be a "reasonable estimate."

With this record, it leaves Members of Congress and other persons skeptical of just what goes on in Cuba. Should it develop that Senator Keating had more reliable information than did the Central Intelligence Agency or the Pentagon it places our official military intelligence in a most embarrassing position. If the facts have been misrepresented to the people, it places the administration in a most embarrassing position. The charge has now been made that not all of the offensive missiles were removed from Cuba as has been announced. If this is not to be true, the American people ought to ask some penetrating questions and demand a complete answer.

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